

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 5, 7, 15, 17-28, 33, 35, 42 and 44-52, without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter.

Please amend Claims 1, 6, 29 and 34, to read as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An ink jet printing apparatus capable of performing a preliminary ejecting operation that does not contribute to printing, said apparatus comprising:

a print head having an ejecting portion,

wherein an amount of ink ejected through said ejecting portion varies depending on the amount of time during which printing is not executed, and wherein an ejection is performed through said ejecting portion only one or two times, selectively, in one preliminary ejecting operation, the preliminary ejecting operation being performed on a print medium if the print medium lies in a printing position relative to said print head and the preliminary ejecting operation being performed on an object other than the print medium if the amount of ink decreases below a normal value before the print medium reaches the printing position.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said preliminary ejecting operation is performed when said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion is decreased below a normal value.

4. (Previously Presented) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 3 wherein said preliminary ejecting operation is performed between the time when said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion starts to decrease below said normal value and the time when said amount of ink recovers to said normal value.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim [[5]] 1 wherein [[said]], if the print medium lies in the printing position when the preliminary ejecting operation is performed, the preliminary ejecting operation is performed on [[said]] the print medium only if dots formed on [[said]] the print medium may be unnoticeable compared to a printed image, and wherein said preliminary ejecting operation is performed on an object other than [[said]] the print medium if dots may be noticeable.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said preliminary ejecting operation is performed when a predetermined time has elapsed after a last ejection, said predetermined time including a time during which said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion is decreased significantly.

9. (Original) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 8 wherein

said predetermined time is determined depending on a temperature condition and a humidity condition of said printing apparatus.

10. (Previously Presented) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 8 wherein said print head has a plurality of ejecting portions, and wherein said predetermined time is determined for each of said ejecting portions.

11. (Original) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 10 wherein said predetermined time for each of said ejecting portions is corrected using dithering, error diffusions, or random numbers so that a dot pattern formed during said preliminary ejecting operation for said plurality of ejecting portions is unnoticeable compared to a printed image.

12. (Previously Presented) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 8 further comprising:

a table used to determine said predetermined time and ejecting numbers for said preliminary ejecting operation, and

a control device for controlling said preliminary ejecting operation, said control device using said table to perform said preliminary ejecting operation.

13. (Original) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said print head includes an electrothermal converting element, said print head ejecting ink using thermal energy generated by said electrothermal converting element.

14. (Original) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said print head includes a piezoelectric element, said print head ejecting ink using mechanical energy generated by said piezoelectric element.

15-28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A preliminary ejecting method for an ink jet printing apparatus comprising a print head having an ejecting portion, said apparatus being capable of performing a preliminary ejecting operation that does not contribute to printing, wherein an amount of ink ejected through said ejecting portion varies depending on the amount of time during which printing is not executed, said method comprising the step of:

executing an ejection through the ejecting portion only one or two times, selectively, in one preliminary ejecting operation, the preliminary ejecting operation being performed on a print medium if the print medium lies in a printing position relative to the print head and the preliminary ejecting operation being performed on an object other than the print medium if the amount of ink decreases below a normal value before the print medium reaches the printing position.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Previously Presented) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 29 wherein said one or two ejections are performed when said amount of ink passing

through said ejecting portion is decreased below a normal value.

32. (Previously Presented) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 31 wherein said preliminary ejecting operation is performed between the time when said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion starts to decrease below said normal value and the time when said amount of ink recovers to said normal value.

33. (Canceled)

34. (Currently Amended) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim ~~[[33]]~~ 29 wherein ~~[[said]]~~, if the print medium lies in the printing position when the preliminary ejecting operation is performed, the preliminary ejecting operation is performed on ~~[[said]]~~ the print medium only if dots formed on ~~[[said]]~~ the print medium may be unnoticeable compared to a printed image, and wherein ~~[[said]]~~ the preliminary ejecting operation is performed on an , object other than ~~[[said]]~~ the print medium if dots may be noticeable.

35. (Canceled)

36. (Previously Presented) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 29 wherein said preliminary ejecting operation is performed when a predetermined time has elapsed after a last ejection, said predetermined time including a time during which the amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion is decreased significantly.

37. (Original) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 36 wherein said predetermined time is determined depending on a temperature condition and a humidity condition of said printing apparatus.

38. (Previously Presented) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 36 wherein said print head has a plurality of ejecting portions, and wherein said predetermined time is determined for each of said ejecting portions.

39. (Original) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 38 wherein said predetermined time for each of said ejecting portions is corrected using dithering, error diffusions, or random numbers so that a dot pattern formed during said preliminary ejecting operation for said plurality of ejecting portions is unnoticeable compared to a printed image.

40-54. (Canceled)